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OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 1.4.2021

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY, 1 APRIL 2021

### COUNCILLORS

**PRESENT** (Chair) Susan Erbil, Achilleas Georgiou, Edward Smith, Lee David-Sanders, Birsen Demirel and Margaret Greer and Claire Stewart

**ABSENT** Elif Erbil

**STATUTORY CO-OPTES:** *1 vacancy (Church of England diocese representative), Mr Simon Goulden (other faiths/denominations representative), Mr Tony Murphy (Catholic diocese representative), Alicia Meniru & 1 vacancy (Parent Governor representative) - Italics Denotes absence*

**OFFICERS:** Mark Bradbury, Director of Property & Economy, Bob Doyle, Head of Economic Development, Claire Johnson, Head of Governance, Scrutiny and Registration Services, Susan O'Connell, Governance and Scrutiny Officer

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### **WELCOME & APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllr Elif Erbil (Substitute Cllr Claire Stewart).

The Panel were reminded of the current Purdah period during the meeting as follows:

"We are now in Purdah and during this heightened period of sensitivity it is important that we ensure that Council resources are not used for political purposes. With this in mind, Councillors are reminded that when at Council events or public meetings, councillors must not use that platform for political purposes. If Officers in attendance at the meeting believe this is happening the Chair of the meeting will be informed.

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## **2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **3 PARTNERSHIPS AND BUSINESSES**

Mark Bradbury, Director of Property & Economy, and Bob Doyle, Head of Economic Development introduced the report.

NOTED:

1. Cabinet approved the Economic Development Strategy 'An Economy That Works for Everyone' in February.
2. The purpose of the new strategy is to:
  - Increase High Quality Employment Opportunities in the borough
  - Connect people with improved skills and training opportunities to be able to take advantage of the high-quality employment opportunities as they arise
  - Make better places in the borough in particular Town Centres
  - Craft a culture offer both for the people of Enfield and as part of London's wider culture offer.
3. The Pandemic has meant that the business support offer to the business communities has been enhanced. A business response team was established at the start of the pandemic. A range of grants was administered throughout the year, this is still ongoing.
4. To date over £100 million in grants and rates relief has been distributed. The latest grant is the Additional Restrictions Grant totalling £9.6 m, phase 1 of this is currently underway. This money must be allocated before the end of June.
5. To enhance the offer to the business community, an additional Head of Service has been seconded to the team to ensure that there is efficient delivery of the grants.
6. £106 m in terms of grants and rates relief received is detailed on page three of the agenda report.
7. There has been new investment and lots of interest in coming into the borough, examples of this being Metaswitch, a Microsoft company with global headquarters in Enfield Town. Troubadour Meridian Water Studios which has helped put Enfield on the map as a leading location for film and high-end TV production, the OMA Studios in the north of the borough and Global Streaming services.
8. In terms of investment from the Council, examples were highlighted which are detailed in the report such as Montague Industrial Estate, the Kickstart scheme and Angel Edmonton projects (Good Growth Fund and African Caribbean Business Centre which will both be delivered within the current year).

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Comments, queries and questions raised:

9. The Strategy that went to Cabinet in February includes an employment breakdown in Enfield by industry. With regards to the wholesale retail trade covering the repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles, employee jobs were roughly twenty thousand. These industries have remained open during the pandemic, what support has this sector received? Officers confirmed that as the motor trade has larger premises than average this has meant that the rateable value was above the threshold for the early small business grants. Motor trade was a priority for the Discretionary Grant scheme. There were gaps in the earlier grant funding as they were not classified in the early criteria or their rateable value was too high. The Council have been looking at supply chains to ensure that these are supported. A lot of Enfield's economy is around supply chains that feed into businesses and the hospitality sector across London. Officers have been looking at the whole supply chain and using the more discretionary grants to support these.
10. What feedback has been received from local businesses for the draft Economic Development Strategy? Pre Covid there were a number of events for larger businesses to look at their priorities. The intention was then to engage with smaller business in a similar way. However, the pandemic has restricted this, but at the same time has provided opportunities to talk to businesses to help them access funding, after this help, the dialogue and support has continued and allowed feedback throughout. This feedback will be taken into account as the Strategy is finalised and then published.
11. The film and TV industry is growing in Enfield now working with potential supply chain businesses. There is a business who were previously involved in theatres, festivals and music events and the Council is now working with them to get them involved in producing sound stages and lighting rigs for film and TV industry, using funding from a partnership with Haringey and the GLA they will be able to take on 20 apprentices in a growing industry in Enfield.
12. Initially, members received complaints on delays in provision of grants after the Tier 4 restrictions in December, is this still an issue? It was confirmed that whilst there were software issues, all lockdown grants are now up to date.
13. Montague Estate, this has taken a long while and is still ongoing, would it have been possible to start work on the 20 acres already owned while the purchase of the remaining 9 acres goes through? Officers confirmed that things have moved rapidly in the last year, work has begun on land already owned by the council, there will be units available for occupation from October 2021. A report will go to Cabinet for approval for a Compulsory Purchase Order in due course. This will be a last resort, the Council is still negotiating with the landowners, there are some deals agreed. It is hoped that the CPO will bring the last few people to negotiate and will also include historic parts of the land where there is no title. There is an agreement in principle with the largest remaining landowner, currently finalising the Heads of Terms.
14. Metaswitch, is there any guarantee that they will still need the building as long as the 15-year lease? Would another business want to use this

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space? Officers advised that there has been a regular dialogue throughout the project. Microsoft have assured the Council that this will be the European headquarters for the Azure brand (Cloud computing brand). The signs are positive, they intend to expand during the course of the lease. There is some nervousness in city centres in the office market. However, demand is increasing in suburbs and smaller towns for co working space in locations close to stations.

15. In discussions with Metaswitch and other office-based businesses has the mix between home working and office working been discussed? What the implications to retail in the town of home working? The discussions with Microsoft are very high level at present but have talked to other businesses about the future of offices. The general view is that there will be a move to working on average 3 days a week in the office, with much greater emphasis on collaboration when in the office. Metaswitch has built in the capacity to expand from 300 to 500. With more agile office working this may allow more people to work from the same office space and this may have a positive impact on town centres.
16. What is the relationship with government on how quick the grants move? An average grant received per business is often quite small was this enough to help businesses survive? Officers advised that during purdah it is not appropriate to comment on the government's policy on grants. In some instances, people fell through the net and the greater flexibility on discretionary grants has helps deal with this. The relationship is good with regular communication. There will be some business who have had relatively large amounts of money and do not survive, some that have had little money and survive and there will be some who have not had enough and will not survive.
17. Troubadour and OMA studios, what is the long-term deal and how long for, what are the economics and finances within the Council for keeping them in Enfield? The deal was done by the Meridian Water team. It was agreed that a short briefing would be provided to the members of OSC on this. OMA Studios, other than working with them and helping them through the planning process and helping to promote them, there are no dealings this a totally commercial deal.
18. Number 46 in the report details some new businesses coming into the borough. An observation was made that this is very positive.
19. Will Enfield residents get priority for the Skills Academy for the studios? The Strategy is moving Enfield to a higher wage economy and this will include making opportunities for Enfield's young people to get into these industries. Firstly, this will be sound stages and big studios, then the supply chain around this.
20. Green Economy, how close will the council be working with Capel Manor and other institutions on this issue? There will be a strong offer on the green economy, due to the development going on at Meridian Water and regeneration of other estates. This provides an opportunity for Enfield to become an exemplar authority introducing new ways of doing things, such as new transport, building materials and technologies. The Council is also having conversations with Central London universities about engaging in the green economy. Pre Covid there were discussions about the possible of an Institute for Technology within the borough

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21. The Culture offer what does this mean? This is about encouraging residents to enjoy cultural pursuits, as well as making Enfield a place where cultural and creative industry can thrive.
22. How many businesses have been lost during pandemic? Are we working with job centres on this? During the pandemic the business start-up rate has accelerated. Whilst some businesses have failed and some people have lost jobs, this is also a time of new business opportunities. Business support will help people optimise these opportunities. The Pandemic has accelerated some trends where the business model was failing, some businesses have adapted and shown great innovation, transitioning into different markets.
23. An observation was made that due diligence work should be undertaken on the businesses that may have gone out of business during Covid to see where the council has engaged or could engage. Officers confirmed analysis will be undertaken once resources are available to look at opportunities to support businesses.

Officers were thanked for their presentation.

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#### **REFERRAL FROM CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION SCRUTINY PANEL**

Cllr Achilleas Georgiou, Chair of the Children Young People & Education Scrutiny Panel highlighted the following:

1. Members of the Youth Parliament and the Union had attended the Panel meeting on mental health and their attendance and input was very worthwhile.
2. On the first referral on mental health, this is an issue because of the lockdown and the pandemic itself over the last year.
3. The Youth Parliament and the unions came forward with views and this is their suggestion. This is a referral to Cabinet to put together an action plan around mental health. It is requested that the policy and that resources are put into this policy and that Cabinet does this in consultation with the various stakeholders including the Youth Parliament, unions and the Children, Young People & Education Scrutiny Panel.
4. The second recommendation is outlined in item 4 of the agenda report and is on Exclusions. This area of work started under a workstream. There are seven bullet points listed in terms of going forward. There are items for consideration for next year's Scrutiny Panel in their programme of work and some items to be brought to Cabinet's attention.
5. The overrepresentation of certain communities was highlighted. Exclusion figures have gone down but there are two groupings that are still higher. It was felt that action needs to be taken by the department, this is for the Scrutiny Panel to keep an eye on and this should be brought to Cabinet's attention.
6. Cabinet should also consider support to pupils going through exclusions and more support should be given to young people and also to governors.

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7. CAMHS the panel felt the referral process could be quicker and would ask Cabinet to look at this.
8. The six-week statutory period for Speech and Language service is not being met. This is for the department to work on and should be brought to Cabinets attention.
9. The final bullet point is around mental health.
10. Page 14 point 22 and 23 states that there are no risks associated with this report. It was felt that there should be risks here. Officers confirmed that when the report goes to Cabinet risks will be identified and included in this report. Risks are put in around the purpose of the report. The Equality Impact Assessment will also be looked at for the Cabinet report. As the report was just for scrutiny to consider the item there are no risks associated with that.

Comments, queries and questions:

11. Regarding the further work on overrepresentation, what is the timescale for this and what kind of data? Cllr Georgiou advised that data at national level is behind, a timing was not set as to when this should come back to Panel.
12. An observation was made that when mental health came to the Health & Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel to look at the impact of Covid on Enfield and surrounding boroughs. The Head of Service advised that the number of referrals had gone down during Covid. What hard evidence is there that young people are suffering high levels of mental health issues? The threshold is quite high for CAMHS. Councillor Georgiou confirmed that the evidence taken on this was directly from the unions and the young people attending the meeting and spoke on behalf of other young people and other staff members in terms of how they have felt in the last year.
13. Exclusions, most schools have policies on exclusions, what schools are doing in this regard would be helpful? Councillor Georgiou drew attention to bullet point two- It was recognised that schools have their own policies on exclusions, and a number of schools are academies, but members felt further work on a uniform approach across the Borough would be beneficial, and an improved process for management of pupils between schools. The Panel had recognised that this will be difficult to achieve.
14. Exclusions- further work needed to support parents and students throughout the process- what is this? Governor training, is this around enhancing Governor training? Councillor Georgiou confirmed that it was felt that the parent pupil support and the governor training could be enhanced and that this support should be looked at.

Following the discussions two votes were taken.

OSC unanimously agreed to refer to Cabinet the following:

- The Council should produce an action orientated mental health charter and policy and provide the resources to make changes that will support young people and staff on matters such as information, uncertainty and staff wellbeing. In producing this the Council is asked to work with the various stakeholders including the unions and the Youth Parliament and with the involvement of the Children Young People and Education Scrutiny Panel.

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OSC unanimously agreed to refer the following to Children, Young People & Education scrutiny Panel to ensure that when setting the work programmes for 2021/22, the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider continuing with Exclusions as an item in order to fully explore and monitor the areas that need further work listed below, and at the appropriate time, OSC gives consideration to the matter being referred to Cabinet. It was agreed for referral to Cabinet for them to note and for them to act upon as necessary.

- That further work currently taking place to fully understand exclusions with regards to overrepresentation in certain communities was brought back to the Panel for a report on the findings and progress of this.
- It was recognised that schools have their own policies on exclusions, and a number of schools are academies, but members felt further work on a uniform approach across the Borough would be beneficial, and an improved process for management of pupils between schools.
- Governor training on exclusions was highlighted by members to consider smaller group sessions with case studies. An update on the training following changes to the service would be useful.
- Further work was needed to consider if the support available for parents and pupils throughout the process was sufficient.
- Further detail to come back to scrutiny on the CAMHS service, including the possibility/barriers to reducing the waiting time for referrals. Arrangements the service has for planning for a potential increase in referrals, and how the service is funded.
- The Panel recognised that difficulty with speech & language is a key trigger for exclusions. An update should address the challenges for the service not meeting its statutory six-week advice submission and what can be done to change this.
- The Panel would like to see an action plan for the growth in mental health issues affecting young people that are arising as a result of the pandemic both for the present and post-Covid-19. Members recognised that the events of the last months will have an enormous impact on young people's lives and may result in difficult to manage behaviour at school. The Panel should like to see all the other updated plans for managing behaviour in schools post-Covid-19.

The process for referral is detailed in the agenda report and the progress on this to be reported back to a future meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

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### VERBAL UPDATE FROM THE SCRUTINY CHAIRS

The Scrutiny Chairs provided the following brief updates.

The Chair of the Children, Young People & Education Scrutiny Panel highlighted the following:

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- Two of the main items for the panel have already been covered under agenda item 4.
- The Panel had six meetings and covered eleven topics.
- The other topics included Covid and how the Council responded on a number of areas, Fostering, School Finances, Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND); vulnerable children, and supporting schools and Headteachers.
- The Panel also provided feedback on the draft Children & Young People's Plan- Empowering Young Enfield and the draft Early Years Help for All Strategy
- The Poverty & Inequality Commission report recommendations came to the final Panel meeting. The Panel recognised that the commission only met a year ago and due to Covid it was hard to track everything originally planned. It was suggested that the Panel review this again next year and that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee could look at this next year as part of their new work programme.
- Members, Youth Parliament members and officers were thanked for the participation and contributions throughout the year.

The Chair of the Crime Scrutiny Panel highlighted the following:

- The Panel have met four times including the work planning meeting.
- The Panel covered at every meeting Safer & Stronger Communities Board performance management. The Safer & Stronger communities Board Partnership Plan is an annual item.
- The Panel also covered the following areas; prostitution (in detail in November and a follow up report in March), burglary, serious youth violence, reoffending, including youth reoffending, Modern Day Slavery and the role of the London Fire Brigade.
- One of the concerns that the Panel had was that lockdown has impacted on crime figures. The analysis on year on year crime figures will need to take this into account.
- Members and officers were thanked for support and contributions and the Cabinet Member for her attendance at several meetings.

The Chair of the Environment & Climate Change Scrutiny Panel highlighted the following:

- The Panel met on four occasions including the work planning meeting.
- In September, the Panel received a presentation on the Meridian Water Environment Strategy, this was due to come back to a meeting at the end of April, but this has now been cancelled due to purdah.
- In December, the Panel looked at Parks and Green Infrastructure Strategy and Waste Service Changes and Flytipping
- In February, the Panel looked at Climate Action Plan Implementation
- In March looked at Low Traffic Neighbourhood Scheme, the Leader of the Council attended for this item.
- Members and officers were thanked for support and contributions and the Leader of the Council for her attendance.

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The Chair of the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Panel highlighted the following:

- The Panel met on four occasions including the work planning meeting.
- The Panel looked at on average two items per meeting with seven items overall.
- The items covered were; the Budget 2020/21, impact of Covid19 on finance and performance, Housing Revenue Account, Debts – (including income and debt recovery; supporting residents in financial hardship), Grants – (including Council’s strategy and approach for grant applications), and Dedicated School Grant Approach.
- CIPFA Financial Management Code was added to the final meeting as this is a new code. It was suggested that an update on the progression of this is received as part of the 2021/22 work programme
- Monitoring reports went to every meeting.
- Members and officers were thanked for support and contributions and the Cabinet Member for her attendance at every meeting.

The Chair of the Health & Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel highlighted the following:

- The Panel met on four occasions including the work planning meeting.
- The Panel covered a range of items the main one being Covid with several reports on these issues.
- Other issues considered were; Older People’s Assessment Unit at Chase Farm Hospital, Reconfiguration of the NHS (still in process), Adult Safeguarding Report, Reardon Court Extra Care Housing, and a report from Barnet, Enfield & Haringey Mental Health team
- One item on the follow up of the CQC Inspection on the North Middlesex Hospital Trust due to the pandemic was deferred.
- Members and officers were thanked for support and contributions and the Cabinet Member for her attendance at every meeting.

The Vice Chair of the Housing Scrutiny Panel highlighted the following:

- The Panel has met on three occasions including the work planning meeting with the final meeting scheduled for the 15 April.
- At Decembers meeting the Panel covered Building Safety and Capital Works, Housing White Paper.
- At February’s meeting the Panel covered Housing Advice Service/ Temporary Accommodation/Homelessness, Allocations Policy
- The final meeting is due to look at the role of Housing Associations.

The Chair of the Regeneration & Economic Development Scrutiny Panel highlighted the following:

- The Panel met on five occasions including the work planning meeting.
- There is a further workshop to look at local plans on the 14 April.
- The main areas were around estate regeneration around Meridian Water. The workstream on this was very helpful.
- Other areas included the Local Plan including Housing Needs and delivery; Skills training, improving Town Centres and the Cultural strategy

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- Members and officers were thanked for support and contributions and the Leader for her attendance at every meeting she was invited to.

A question was raised on what the support will be for scrutiny next year and clarification on the detail as members are aware of a restructure of the Governance Team. Claire Johnson advised that in July 2020 the support to the Council's Committee structure including scrutiny was considered in light of the changes that were agreed at annual Council and the feedback from the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CFPS). The revised committee structure saw a number of the Council's formal committees streamlined and as a result of this the number of formal committees that the governance team supports has been reduced. The relevant departments will now lead on the work of the scrutiny panels providing the relevant information. Reports and briefings will continue to be provided by departments and the governance and scrutiny team members will continue to provide the constitutional advice and the administrative support to all the formal committees including scrutiny. This includes facilitating the coordination of the work programme, liaising with departments and chairs. The new structure reflects the revised workloads of the team.

There were new ways of working in terms of scrutiny which came from the CFPS report. There are now seven standing panels and no workstreams. The updates just provided demonstrates the amount of work the panels have achieved and the success of the new system. Over the next year this success can be built on.

Members sought assurance that will not be any change in the level of support received from officers in the governance team as they are aware of a consultation on a number of redundancies. A concern was raised on the independence of scrutiny and keeping the line between the executive and scrutiny.

It was acknowledged that these are difficult financial times and difficult decisions will need to be made going forward.

Officers confirmed that it is not appropriate to comment on the restructure. Members are reminded that the coordination, the liaison with the departments, the liaison with Chairs will continue from the governance team. The independence of scrutiny will continue to be championed.

Members requested that a briefing note is provided by the Monitoring Officer on details of what the plans are going forward.

## **6 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Members were reminded that there is a Call-in meeting on the 8 April and a provisional Call in meeting on the 27 April.

The dates for future business meetings will be set at annual Council.

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Members were thanked for their participation throughout the year.

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